

**MINUTES
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2009**

Commissioners Present: Bruce M. Abrams, Joyce Abrams, Mary Alcock, Mark K. Dillon, Susan Hawk, Gary Lynn, Teresa Oyos, Nicole Murray Ramirez, Carolina Alcoser Ramos, Gracia Molina de Pick

Excused: Shonee Henry, Lorraine Johnson, Nghiep Le, Les Williamson

Absent: None

Staff: Ashley Walker, Executive Director (ED); Lori Thacker, Deputy City Attorney

Chair Ramirez called the 202nd meeting of the City of San Diego Human Relations Commission (HRC) to order at 5:45 p.m.

I. PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

Roll Call: 10 Commissioners were present, 4 excused, and 0 absent.

Minutes – The January 21, 2009 minutes were approved.

II. OLD BUSINESS

San Diego Food Bank: ED Walker called the San Diego Food Bank twice to follow up on questions that had been raised by the Commission during last month's presentation by Mr. Hage (San Diego Food Bank). ED Walker has not yet received a response. Chair Ramirez stated that he had already spoken to the firefighters and that the fire stations would be interested in participating in a possible food drive, but we still need more information from the Food Bank to move forward.

III. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Harvey Milk Day – Today a press conference was scheduled regarding Harvey Milk Day, but it was cancelled due to the budget crisis. ED Walker sent the letter by the Commission, and also sent the letter with a memo to the Mayor and City Council. Chair Ramirez stated that according to Leno, the legislation will probably be signed this year.

Office Move – HRC's office will be moving from the 9th to 13th floor next week Friday.

IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Hate and Violence Prevention

- **United for a Hate Free San Diego:** Commissioner B. Abrams attended with ED Walker the Hate-Free San Diego meeting at the Episcopal Church a few days ago. Commissioner B. Abrams reported that the Hate-Free San Diego declaration has gained unanimous consent and will be going to Council on March 10. ED Walker stated that the declaration on hate motivated behavior has been sold to the community, which is a remarkable accomplishment for the Commission. Councilmembers Hueso and Young are co-sponsoring the declaration, which is also in front of other cities, such as La Mesa, Encinitas, Santee and Oceanside, as well as 4-5 others, or will be in the next two months (although some declarations may be modified to fit the unique needs of each community). ED Walker stated she is hoping that a plaque or other symbolic item will be placed in every City Hall, declaring how hate-motivated behavior is unacceptable.
- **Youth Empowerment Violence Prevention Summit:** Commissioner J. Abrams reported that she attended the Violence Prevention Summit at the War Memorial Building, put on by the Commission on Gang Prevention and Intervention. Commissioner J. Abrams commented that it was a very disappointing event and was poorly planned. There were approximately 350 attendees. In attendance were Superintendent Terry Grier, Tony Young, Chief Probation Officer Mack Jenkins, and Chief Landsdowne. The Mayor was scheduled but did not attend. Commissioner J. Abrams expressed disappointment with the guest speakers leaving early, before hearing what the students had to say, and the overall poor planning of the event.

Commissioner J. Abrams sent an email to Christopher Yanov, one of the Gang Prevention Commissioners. Mr. Yanov is the founder of Reality Changers, an afterschool program that also raises money for scholarships. Commissioner J. Abrams suggested that Mr. Yanov speak to the Human Relations Commission.

Chair Ramirez stated that this information on the Summit is disappointing, and that the feedback would be helpful to Councilmember Tony Young. Chair Ramirez asked that the email be given to ED Walker to forward to Councilmember Young.

ED Walker stated that the Commission on Gang Prevention's Executive Director, Lynne Sharpe-Underwood, was aware of Commissioner Abrams' concerns, and suggested that the Commission find ways to support the other commissions who can hopefully use the Commission's comments constructively.

- **Anti-Defamation League:** Commissioner Dillon reported that he has been working with the Anti-Defamation League on the cyber-bullying conference, and that the ADL is getting information out to educators, principals and counselors regarding cyber-bullying.

B. Immigration

- **Immigration Rights Consortium** – ED Walker reported that the IRC is about to put together a training tool kit – “Know Your Rights,” which will be printed next week with training planned for mid-March. Members of the committee have spoken with President Obama’s staff, who indicated that much work is being done on immigration reform. The committee feels that much of what they want will happen, except for border security policies.

Commissioner de Pick stated that she knows of upcoming national and regional conferences on immigration and violence at the border, and she will send the materials to ED Walker in case anyone is interested in attending.

C. Educational Disparities

Commissioner J. Abrams reported that YGEP is turning into something to be proud of. The youth are learning how to present, set goals, prepare resumes, and are training the kids to become trainers. She has seen how the program has succeeded in raising the self-esteem and confidence of the students, which is passed on to each generation of students.

Commissioner J. Abrams visited Hoover High, where the Vice Principal talked to the kids who participated in the MLK breakfast. Certificates of Appreciation still need to be presented to them.

Commissioner J. Abrams has been trying to make an appointment with SDUSD Superintendent Dr. Grier to speak to him about the Violence Prevention Summit. Dr. Grier has been extremely difficult to contact, but she will be meeting with his staff member on March 3rd at noon.

D. Criminal Justice System Disparities Committee – No report.

E. Legislative Update

Chair Ramirez reported that the Harvey Milk Day legislation will be introduced by Senator Leno this year.

V. OPEN DISCUSSION – COMMISSION RESTRUCTURE

Chair Ramirez asked the Commissioners what they think the Commission's goals and priorities for 2009 should be.

Commissioner Lynn stated that the Commission should consider economic justice – the impact of the economy on the economically disadvantaged and minority groups. Chair Ramirez noted that when the economy suffers, certain minority groups tend to be blamed, and we may see an increase in hate crimes as a result.

Commissioner Dillon stated that it is important to consider how economic justice affects each of the Commission's focus areas – immigration, hate crimes, criminal justice, etc.

Chair Ramirez encouraged the Commissioners to get to know each of the Councilmembers and interact with them regularly.

Commissioner Alcock stated that she and Commissioner B. Abrams will be visiting with Kevin Faulkner and asked for input on important issues that should be discussed. Chair Ramirez stated that Faulkner should be supportive of and sensitive to the homeless problem in his district, which includes downtown. ED Walker suggested that Faulkner be sent the declaration on Hate Motivated behavior and that the hate pyramid be attached.

Commissioner B. Abrams had lunch with Donna Frye and met with Marti Emerald. The Commission seems to have ties with all Councilmembers, but needs to strengthen ties with Sherri Lightner. Commissioner J. Abrams stated that she will meet with Lightner shortly.

Commissioner Oyos reported that she works in Todd Gloria's district. He recently met with UCSD and seems very interested in healthcare issues.

ED Walker will prepare new binders to distribute to all Councilmembers.

Chair Ramirez asked each Commissioner to report on their recent activities:

Commissioner de Pick: Commissioner de Pick reported that she attended the presidential inauguration, which was a worthwhile event and notably did not have any reported incidents. This reminded her that in San Diego, there are many issues regarding police harassment. Commissioner de Pick suggested that we should get better acquainted with the Citizens Review Board. Chair Ramirez suggested they have CRB's Executive Director, Patrick Hunter, visit the Commission next month to give us a report on their activities and to answer any questions we may have. Commissioner de Pick also reported that next month is the national Women's History Month. The last Saturday of March will be the Women's Hall of Fame, which recognizes the contributions of women to San

Diego's history. Schools will be celebrating Women's History Month and Commissioner de Pick will speak to a high school group to present the history and experience of Latino women in San Diego. Commissioner de Pick encourages others to learn more about Women's History Month, which is a worldwide celebration because of American workers killed. Although it is a worldwide celebration not many in America know its history.

Commissioner Dillon: Commissioner Dillon reported that he has been continuing to work on the cyberbullying conference. Also, his company, Verizon, has a foundation which provides community grants. He attempted to get money for the MLK breakfast, but the time frame was too short to make it happen. Commissioner Dillon asked Chair Ramirez to help identify 2-3 events the foundation should contribute to this coming year.

Commissioner J. Abrams: Commissioner J. Abrams suggested inviting Christopher Yanov of Reality Changers to do a 20 minute presentation to the Commission. He can also provide a report from the Gang Commission since he is a member of that Commission. Commissioner J. Abrams stated that she could arrange for him to speak at the next meeting. Commissioner J. Abrams also inquired on the status of Keith Turnham. ED Walker said that the last time she spoke with him he was doing okay, but she will get an updated status and let the Commission know how he is doing.

Commissioner Lynn: Commissioner Lynn reported that much of his recent activities have been consumed with the MLK breakfast, and YWCA presentation on domestic violence and child abuse by Jane Seymour. Commissioner Lynn also reminded the Commissioners on the Council on American-Islamic Relations banquet on the 28.

Commissioner Hawk: Commissioner Hawk reported that she has been continuing to attend various Native American functions. SCTCA (Southern California Tribal Chairman's Association) is a consortium of 17 different tribes. They have been trying to get more collaboration with other existing organizations. She has been getting the word out on the Commission and wants to get HRC on their agenda. They meet quarterly. Chair Ramirez commented that there has been a void in the representation of Native American issues, and that they need to increase representation on boards and commissions. Chair Ramirez requested a speaker on San Diego County Native American tribes and issues. Commissioner Hawk would like tribal leader Paul Cuero from Campo to speak, and if he is unavailable, she knows of several backup speakers. Chair Ramirez requested the Commission will shoot for April for a presentation regarding the Native American community, which will be educational for us all.

Commissioner Oyos: Commissioner Oyos reported that she will be attending and presenting at the HIV/AIDS women's conference on March 21. The conference

will discuss prevention, treatments, safe sex and self-care. Commissioner Oyos requested donations for baskets which will be raffled off at the event.

Commissioner Ramos: Commissioner Ramos reported that she has been working with the attorney for Bi-National Center for Human Rights in Tijuana, who succeeding in getting asylum for 35 just last year.

Commissioner B. Abrams: Commissioner B. Abrams reported that he attended a University of Oregon Alumni event at the SD Yacht Club. There were approximately 25-30 people there. They showed a video on recruitment. The video showing students remarkably lacked diversity, which does not reflect our community, and brought his observation to the attention of the attendees. He also attended the American-Israel Political Affairs Committee at the downtown Hilton. There were 1200 people there. Commissioner B. Abrams commented that they had security everywhere, as they do at all Jewish events recently.

Commissioner Alcock: Commissioner Alcock reported that she will be attending the Victory Fund lunch. The Victory Fund is a political organization which provides a platform and training ground for gay politicians running for local, state, county political office. The Fund sends candidates to boot camp, where they learn to raise funds, become a politician, and speak to the public.

VI. MEETING ADJOURNED: The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Prepared by Lori Thacker, Deputy City Attorney
Approved by Ashley Walker, Executive Director